

THE MEANING OF MARRIAGE

Chapter 7 Part 1:
Singleness and Marriage



Singleness and Marriage

- **Large group discussion:** Brainstorm reasons why people might be single.
- **Small Group Discussion:** Put yourself in the “other's” shoes
 - If married: What would be different if you were single for a week?
 - If unmarried: What would be you were married for a week?



THE MEANING OF MARRIAGE

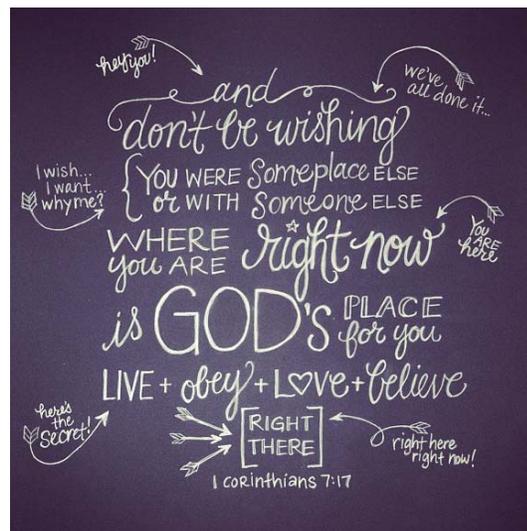
Singleness and Marriage

- **Small Group Discussion:** What is the worst advice you have been given or heard given about singleness?



Singleness and Marriage

"single people cannot live their lives well as singles without a balanced, informed view of marriage."



1 Corinthians 7:29-31

What I mean, brothers and sisters, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they do not; those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.



The Goodness of Singleness

"But Christianity's founder, Jesus Christ, and leading theologian, St. Paul, were both single their entire lives. Single adults cannot be seen as somehow less fully formed or realized human beings than married persons because Jesus Christ, a single man, was the perfect man. Paul's assessment in 1 Corinthians 7 is that singleness is a good condition blessed by God, and in many circumstances, it is actually better than marriage."



The Goodness of Singleness

"Christians who remained single, then, were making the statement that our future is not guaranteed by the family but by God. Single adult Christians were bearing testimony that God, not family, was their hope."



Poor explanations for Singleness:

- "As soon as you're satisfied with God alone, he'll bring someone special into your life."
- "You're too picky."
- "As a single you can commit yourself wholeheartedly to the Lord's work."
- "Before you can marry someone wonderful, the Lord has to make you someone wonderful."



Meaning of Marriage Challenge

- You will be given three challenges.
- It's up to you to decide if you want to complete each challenge:
 - On your own
 - With a partner
 - As a group (as many people as you want!)



The Penultimate Character of Marriage



"Innumerable Disney-style popular culture narratives begin telling stories only when two parties are about to find True Love and then, once they do, the story fades out. The message is that what matters in life is finding romance and marriage. Everything else is prologue and afterword."



The Penultimate Character of Marriage

"Marriage was created to be a reflection on the human level of our ultimate love relationship and union with the Lord. It is a sign and foretaste of the future kingdom of God. But this high view of marriage tells us that marriage therefore, is penultimate. It points us to the Real Marriage that our souls need and the Real Family our hearts were made for."



Gender "Completeness" and Singleness

"In this way, male and female "complete" each other and reflect the image of God together (Genesis 1:26-28) But this is not something that only married people can do. It happens quite naturally in a strong Christian community, where the sharing of our hearts and lives goes beyond the superficial down to what God is teaching us and how he is forming and growing us."



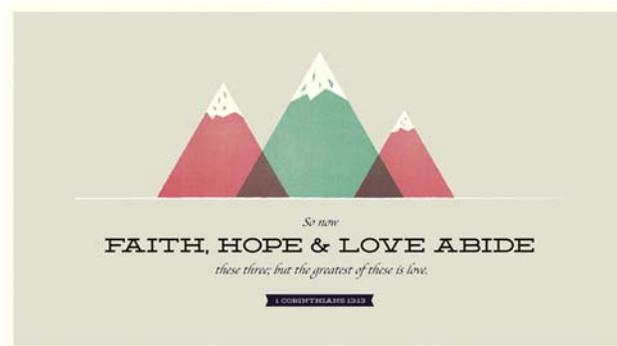
The Goodness Seeking Marriage

"Unlike sex-and-romance-saturated Western society, Christians see singleness as good because our union with Christ can fulfill our deepest longings."



The Goodness Seeking Marriage

"What happens if we see the mission of marriage to teach us about our sins in unique and profound ways and to grow us out of them through providing someone who speaks the truth in love to us?"



Read 1 Corinthians 7:25-28

Now concerning the betrothed, I have no command from the Lord, but I give my judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. I think that in view of the present distress it is good for a person to remain as he is. Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife. But if you do marry, you have not sinned, and if a betrothed woman marries, she has not sinned. Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that.



1 Corinthians 7:25-28

Paul offers some practical advice because marriage brings unique challenges.

Large Group Question: What concerns do those who are married have that singles do not?



Read 1 Corinthians 7:29-35

This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.



Read 1 Corinthians 7:29-35

I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband. I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.



1 Corinthians 7:29-35

- Some who read these verses might think that Paul is anti-marriage.
- Paul's point is not that one is better than the other (singleness vs. marriage) but that there is a priority BIGGER than whether we are married or single.
- **Large Group Discussion:** Whether single or married, who should have the first place in your life?
 - What priorities can take first place in people's lives who are married?
 - What priorities can take first place in people's lives who are single?



1 Corinthians 7:29-35

- We find ultimate fulfillment and intimacy in Christ.
- God puts people in our lives (spouse, friends, family, church community, etc.) through whom we can experience that fulfillment and intimacy.
- **Large Group Discussion:** Considering both of the above statements are true: How can an unmarried person find appropriate emotional fulfillment and intimacy?



WE'LL SEE YOU
NEXT WEEK!



Singleness and Marriage Part 2